



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 110th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2007

House of Representatives

MR. PRESIDENT: NO ESCALATION!

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I rise in support of this resolution.

Let me just say, as Chair of the Veterans' Affairs Committee of this House of Representatives, no matter where we stand on this war, no matter where we vote on this resolution, we are going to make sure that the brave young men and women who come home get all the care and all the support they need from a grateful Nation. We will show what support of the troops means when they do come home.

Now, those who voted for the war back in 2002 are sometimes asked, Knowing then what you know now, how would you have voted?

Well, Madam Speaker, we knew then what we know now, and we know now what you are going to know a year or two from now.

Let me read to you what I said 4 1/2 years ago when we had the debate on Iraq: "I rise in opposition to this resolution to grant unilateral authority to the President. I cannot believe that the Members of this body are ceding our constitutional authority to this President. And

they can give me all the fancy whereases and phrases and put all the fig leafs and write all the report language they want, but this is a blank check. This is a Gulf of Tonkin resolution. This is a violation not only of our Constitution but will lead to a violation of the U.N. charter.

"Wake up, my colleagues. Why would anyone vote to do that? That is not our constitutional responsibility. And when we vote on this resolution, will America be safer? No, I think America will be less safe. We will dilute the war against terrorism. The destabilization of the area will lead to the increased probability of terrorists getting nuclear weapons. Al Qaeda is probably cheering the passage of this resolution. Now is their chance to get more weapons." I said that then.

Then we talked about the imminent threat. You guys threw the imminent threat at us. What a lie. And what are you saying now? We are emboldening our enemies and demoralizing our troops. I heard the word "sabotage." I heard the word "retreat."

I will tell you what demoralizes our troops, my colleagues. What demoralizes our troops will be

the failure to provide adequate health care when they get home. What demoralizes our troops is the story of just a couple weeks ago when a young marine went to a VA hospital in Minnesota suffering from PTSD, and they said, You have got to go on a waiting list. And this young man committed suicide. That is what demoralizes our troops. That is what we have to prevent here, and that is what we are working on to do.

I said back in 2002: "I have heard all my colleagues on the other side calling us appeasers, those who are going to vote against this resolution. We are wishful thinkers. We have our eyes closed. We sit on our hands." And, of course, now we want to cut and run.

Well, I tell you, Madam Speaker, no one on this side is suggesting cutting and running. Making peace is hard work. Just ask Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ask Gandhi. Ask Nelson Mandela. They didn't cut and run. They were peacemakers. And they changed the history of this world.

So let us not hear talk of retreat and sabotage and surrender. We want action for peace. We want it now, and we want the United States to be part of that action.

I said also in 2002, Madam Speaker: "There is a whiff of Vietnam in the air. I had a constituent call me and say, 'You know, if you enjoyed Vietnam, you are really going to love Iraq.' The mail is running 10-1 against this war. Protests have already begun around the Nation and around the world."

I said to the President then that "you came to the office as a uniter, not a divider. Yet we have gone down the road to division in this Nation. You can see it. You can smell it. You can hear it. And we are going to get more.

"So, let us not go further down that road, Mr. President. Rethink this policy. A country divided over war is not a country that is going to make any progress. Let us have a rethinking of this war."

That is what I said in 2002. You guys didn't want to listen to us then. The President didn't want to listen to us then. You really should listen to us now and listen to the people of America who voted in 2006 to change this policy.

Let us respond to the American people. Let us vote against escalation. Let us begin to bring the troops home. Vote "yes" on this resolution.